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TAGS: [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [CPAS](#) [MO](#)  
SUBJECT: Disney World, Morocco, and Q-1 Visas

Ref A: 00 Casablanca 465, Ref B: 04 Casablanca 1174, Ref C:  
Casablanca 188, Ref D: Rabat 392

¶1. Summary: Overstays by Q-1 visa holders who serve as cultural representatives at Disney's EPCOT Center in Orlando, Florida have long been a concern. Post conducted a validation study of Q-1 recipients issued visas between September 2006 and June 2008. The results confirmed that the overwhelming majority do not return to Morocco. End Summary.

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Background  
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¶2. Q-1 visas are issued to cultural representatives who work in the Moroccan Pavilion at Orlando Florida's EPCOT Center (Refs A and B). Post regularly sees non-immigrant visa applications from friends and family to visit former Q-1 recipients, indicating that many Q-1 recipients do not return to Morocco. Post's IV LE supervisor, a Q-1 alumnus himself, noted that in his Q-1 class, only three returned to Morocco (Ref C).

¶3. In August 2009, the National Benefits Center for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) contacted post about its concerns regarding the high number of I-485s (Request to Establish Permanent Residence or Adjust Status) it receives for Moroccan Q-1 recipients.

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The Applicant Pool  
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¶4. Refs A and B noted that post communicated with Disney in 2000 and 2004 about Q-1 overstay trends. Disney undertook to select applicants who were likely to return to Morocco. The applicants in consular interviews today say they undergo a series of interviews with recruiters and Disney representatives by phone and in person. All applicants currently have some educational or practical training in the tourism or hospitality industry. They can explain aspects of Moroccan culture in English. However, some applicants struggle more than others with English.

¶5. Overcoming 214b is the applicants' biggest hurdle. All are single, often students or interns in the hospitality industry, and they rarely have previous foreign travel. As proof of their intent to return to Morocco, the majority of applicants give canned answers about how they want to take advantage of the Morocco's efforts to develop its tourism industry. They also have similar vague plans to open their own five-star Moroccan restaurants or hotels (See Ref D regarding the effects of the world economic crisis on Morocco's ambitious plans to increase tourist facilities.) Not all applicants receive their visas; 37 Q-1 applicants were refused under 214b during the same sample period.

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Validation Study: Methodology  
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¶16. Using the CCD, post retrieved the electronic records of 103 Q-1 visa recipients issued between September 2006 and June 2008. The Fraud Prevention Manager (FPM) then reviewed the recipients' travel records in the DHS Arrival and Departure Information System (ADIS) database. ADIS documents arrival and departure records and any efforts by an applicant to adjust status in the United States.

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Results  
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¶17. ADIS results confirmed that the majority of Q-1 applicants are staying in the United States as students, spouses of American citizens, or as visa status violators. Of the 103 issued cases, the breakdown is as follows:

a. One person had no record of using his/her Q-1 visa to travel to the United States.

b. Twelve (12) returned to Morocco: This includes one person who adjusted to F-1 student status (see below) and a 2009 Diversity Lottery (DV) winner who returned to Morocco to complete her DV application.

c. Fifty (50) adjusted to B-2 (tourist status) or just remained in the United States: Of these, 41 overstayed their Q-1s or adjusted to B-2 and overstayed. Nine were still legally in the United States as tourists at the time this cable was drafted. One person in B-2 status was waiting for a decision on her application for CR-6 status (lawful residence based on marriage to the U.S. citizen in the United States).

d. Twenty-seven (27) adjusted status as CR-6s. All arrived as Q-1s. However in 26 of out of 27 cases, there are additional entries in the arrival records indicating they were actually admitted under the visa class Conditionally Resident (CR)-6. This would seem to indicate that the applicant married an American citizen within a week of having received a Q-1 visa. DHS Q-1 marriage fraud interviews indicated that many Moroccans search the Internet for an American willing to marry them.

e. Twelve (12) adjusted to F-1 status. Student Exchange Visitors Information System (SEVIS) records indicate that only one of these returned to Morocco after finishing her studies at Valencia Community College. Of the remaining eleven, nine enrolled at UCEDA, an English language school in Florida, one enrolled at the ZONI language school in New York, and one enrolled at Everest University. The one enrolled at Everest is registered as "deactivated" in the SEVIS system with no records of her departure. The SEVIS status of the three enrolled at UCEDA was noted as "terminated" with no record of their departures. This leaves seven former Q-1s who are actively studying in the United States.

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Communicating with Disney  
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¶18. Disney welcomed FPM's contact with their international recruitment and visa compliance officers about how they recruit Q-1s cultural representatives. In response to questions, Disney reported that many applicants come through recommendations from the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism. Disney also uses a procurement ally, International Services. International Services handles all initial screening of Disney's European and Moroccan candidates. International Services conducts preliminary interviews for Q-1 applicants to verify that they meet overall requirements for the program.

¶19. Company representatives from both Disney and Marrakesh Restaurant (part of the Moroccan Pavilion at the EPCOT Center) meet with candidates in Morocco in the fall each year. The recruitment interviews are conducted in English. Qualified candidates are selected by the Marrakesh Restaurant, after deliberation with Disney representatives. The majority of applicants usually have two years of education beyond high school, often in the tourism or hospitality fields, but others may have only practical experience in the field.

The process described matched steps Disney planned to take (Refs A and B). Post accepted Disney's invitation to send a consular representative to its recruitment meetings in Morocco in November. ¶10. Post then asked if Disney ever conducted a review of the numbers of cultural representatives who return to Morocco. Disney said they did not but rather noted that they partnered with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (DHS/ICE) in Orlando to report representatives who leave the program early. Disney added it informs cultural representatives of the expectation to return to Morocco.

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Communication with DHS  
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¶11. FPM spoke with Special Agent Richard McGahey, Disney's DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contact. He confirmed he conducts arrival briefings for EPCOT cultural representatives on their responsibilities as non-immigrants. He also keeps track of Q-1 recipients who depart early. However, Q-1 recipients who complete their programs have a thirty-day grace period before they are required to depart and McGahey does not track this sub-group. He participated in two 2007 DHS investigations of the Moroccan Pavilion based on Department of State leads. McGahey said he had noted his concerns about marriage fraud with Q-1 recipients to the vice president of the Marrakesh restaurant.

¶12. Post's DHS attach office responded with interest to the preliminary results of the Q-1 validation study. FPM provided a copy of the results for DHS to conduct its own review of the legal status of the Q-1 recipients. In addition, DHS plans to use this cable as the basis for a DHS Intel report on Q-1 recipients.

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Next Steps  
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¶13. The validation study results demonstrate a need to revise questions asked in Q-1 interviews. To date, post focused on past experience or training in the tourism/hospitality industry, ability to explain Moroccan culture in English, and general plans for the future. Post will now also ask about online friends and future educational plans.

¶14. Post looks forward to meeting with Disney and ICE officials in November. Observing the recruitment activities will inform post about Disney's selection process. In its communication with post, Disney welcomed suggestions and questions regarding the cultural representative program. In light of this opportunity, post hopes to hold side meetings to discuss issues surrounding the Q-1 program at the Moroccan Pavilion.

MILLARD